NOVEMBER 1960

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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

Autumn / Thanksgiving / Advent

TOWARD A REFORMED EPIPHANY SEASON — *James O. Handley, Jr.*

MORALITY AND THE ARTIST — *Charles J. Miller*

"THIS INFALLIBLE RULE" — *Leonard Verduin*

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TAMME M. VANDEN BOSCH — *J. G. Vanden Bosch*

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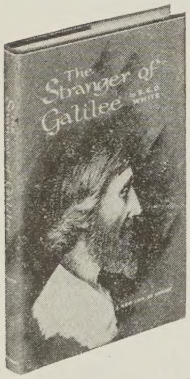

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A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT & OPINION

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In This Issue

Although the first three pieces were written at different times and by different authors, they complement each other nicely and form a helpful guide for meditation.

The Rev. James Handley draws once again on the Church's rich heritage of worship and suggests how we today might enlarge and deepen the pattern of our worship throughout the year by giving proper attention to those outstanding events when God in Christ manifested Himself to the world.

Dr. Charles Miller offers some fresh thinking on the battle that every now and then is waged among us — the battle between artist and public.

The Rev. Leonard Verduin examines the history of the word "infallible," and particularly its use in the French of the time when the Belgic Confession was written. He shows that for the author and first readers of the Confession, the word "infallible" meant non-failing and non-falsifying; it did not mean what it virtually means today — scientifically precise and accurate.

Dr. James Daane continues his discussion of God's electing grace. He warns against seeing divine election as an arbitrary act of absolute power.

Professor J. G. Vanden Bosch writes another of his fascinating, brief biographies of early leaders in the Church. This time he helps us to appreciate the first Christian Reformed missionary both among pioneers and Indians.

Mr. John Beversluis reviews a remarkable set of books for children written by C. S. Lewis. The review serves well as an introduction to these books; at the same time it gives clues to other good literature for children.

Our apologies to our readers and to Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff for omitting a large section of type in the article entitled "The Word of God and Learning," published in the October 1960 *Reformed Journal*. The omitted material should have appeared on page 18, beginning twelve lines from the bottom of the left-hand column, and immediately following the sentence "But examples can be found — the."

Dr. Wolterstorff's complete article will be printed in the December 1960 *Journal* together with a response to it by Dr. H. Evan Runner.

Autumn

Though much is written of the Promise of Spring, comparatively little is said of the Promise of Autumn. Is there no such Promise? Do autumn colors "flare and fade" in vain, leaving the tone of the season to be set thus:

The melancholy days have come
The saddest of the year . . . .
(Holmes)

The day is cold and dark and dreary,
It rains, and the wind is never weary . . . .
(Longfellow)

Autumn is, indeed, fraught with the threat of winter, and of dark, short days; and all of this becomes more threatening as one's years accumulate. With the human inclination to "look before and after, and pine for what is not," one tends to pass through his autumns recalling summer skies once blue and dreading winter skies hung heavy.

Spring, vibrant and thrilling in itself, is full of promise of blithe days to come. Plainly it is the season of beginnings, of rejoicing in them, and of the epitome of all this new life in the joy of Easter morning. The season and the open tomb fullfill each other. The grave's victory and death's sting seem never farther off than when the first glad bird's song breaks the silence long imposed by frost and snow.

And autumn is a turning point. Death harvests. Leaves fall. Birds flee. But the turning of autumn is not toward death. It is toward glory!

John Henry Newman writes that in his youth he liked to believe that living things — trees, bushes, flowers — were the habitations of angels. If, then, the angel of the soft-brown willow in the spring be gentle, is not the angel of the majestic autumn-coated maple exuberant? And if the blooming willow entice to the delights of earth the summer long, does not the blazing maple direct the soul to heaven? That birth should be rejoiced in — this is the Promise of Spring. That death can be crowned with glory — this is the Promise of Autumn!

To what other sublime truth can the hillside, "all but crushed with color," bear witness than that the soft, gentle beginning of life is destined to translation into beauty that staggers?

Did Walter Pater ever see an autumn hilltop? —

I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Indeed, had he ever studied the fierce glow of sinking embers, gleaming like light of distant cities where there is no need of sun?

Is not the dying fall even more than this from John Burroughs:

Serene I fold my hands and wait . . . .
I know my own will come to me.

There is serenity, to be sure, in the deep blue sky of late autumn days, in the afternoons grown twice the length of summer ones. But "yon crag" shouts more than this. It all but strains toward God — why, it *does* strain, and reflects what it sees.

Even Keats —

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness . . .
. . . thou hast thy music too . . . .

does not quite catch the verve, the power, the thunder of autumnal glory.

The laden orchard portending "Well done, thou good and faithful

servant"; the tiny leaf most colorful in its latest hour suggesting "Come ye beloved of my Father" – does not all proclaim in mighty voice, in voiceless voice, in still small voice – whichever best we hear – that death mounts, climbs, reaches to majesty; and life ends more wondrously than it began!

On the day, or days, when the meadow larks depart these northern fields, they pause to break their summer silence and sing once again. It may be in farewell. It may be in anticipation of return. But it is a song at parting, and a glad, sweet, ethereal song, remindful of places far away, of angels always singing "Holy, holy, holy . . . ."

Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.

But not quite the last of life. Just the beginning. A springtime come full, mounting through glory into glory, moving from few things to many things, from promise into permanence, from sweet sunrise through burning sunset into everlasting light. A light which is reflected in every shining leaf. The Promise of Autumn.

"And I saw the New Jerusalem . . . descending from God . . .," reflected in a hillside which though on fire was not destroyed. "And I heard a voice, saying, 'Come. . . .' "

—L.D.K.

Thanksgiving

"It is a good thing to give thanks."

1621 . . .

December 11, 1621
Plymouth Colony

George Morton, Esq., Falmouth, England.

SIR:

You shall understand that, in the little time that a few of us have been here, we have built seven dwelling-houses and four for the use of the plantation, and have made preparation for divers others. We set the last spring some twenty acres of Indian corn and sowed some six acres of barley and peas, and, according to the manner of the Indians, we manured our ground with herrings or rather shads, which we have in great abundance and take with great ease at our doors.

Our corn did prove well; and, God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late down. They came up well and blossomed; but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors.

They four in one day killed many fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week, at which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king, Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation, and bestowed on our governor, and on the captain and the others.

And, altho it is not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we wish you partakers of our plenty.

Thy faithful servant,
Edward Winslow

* * * *

A Proclamation

1795 . . .

When we review the calamities which afflict so many other nations, the present condition of the United States affords much matter of consolation and satisfaction. . . . In such a state of things it is in especial manner our duty as a people, with devout reverence and affectionate gratitude, to acknowledge our many and great obligations to Almighty God, and to implore Him to continue and confirm the blessings we experienced.

Deeply penetrated with this sentiment, I, George Washington, President of the United States, do recommend to all religious societies and denominations, and to all persons whosoever, within the United States, to set apart and observe Thursday, the 19th of February next, as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, and on that day to meet together and render sincere and hearty thanks to the Ruler of nations for the manifold and signal mercies which distinguish our lot as a nation; particularly for the possession of constitutions of government which unite, and by their union, establish liberty with order; for the preservation of our peace, foreign and domestic . . . and generally for the prosperous condition of our affairs, public and private, and at the same time humbly and fervently beseech the kind Author of these blessings graciously to prolong them to us; to imprint on our hearts a deep and solemn sense of our obligations to Him for them; to teach us rightly to estimate their immense value; to preserve us from the arrogance of prosperity, and from hazarding the advantages we enjoy by delusive pursuits, to dispose us to merit the continuance of His favors by not abusing them, by our gratitude for them, and by a corresponding conduct as citizens and as men to render this country more and more a safe and propitious asylum for the unfortunate of other countries; to extend among us true and useful knowledge; to diffuse and establish habits of sobriety, order, morality, and piety, and finally to impart all the blessings we possess or ask for ourselves to the whole family of mankind.

In testimony whereof, I have caused the seal of the United States of America to be affixed to these presents, and signed the same with my hand. Done at the city of Philadelphia the first day of January, 1795.

—GEORGE WASHINGTON

By the President:
Edm. Randolph

Advent

"The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come."
"The dayspring from on high hath visited us."
". . . This, the time of thy visitation."
MALACHI 3:1, LUKE 1:78, 19:44

The essential and timeless truth beneath the whole Advent-to-Easter story is found, with varying degrees of clarity but with unchanging certainty, on every page of Scripture: God has made Himself known, has taken action in history. The Lord of Hosts has invaded our beaches, and established a bridgehead within our world of time and space, events and people. The God who seemed aloof has intervened.

Throughout the history of Israel, from Abraham and Moses to the prophets and the Exile, men saw the hand of God at work, the heart of God laid bare. Throughout, He is the God whose Word has come to men; and on the last page of the Old Testament that Word finds final and perfect expression in the promise, "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come."

Nor is the expectation disappointed. The New Testament opens with news of the divine inbreaking in the coming of a Child. A prophet appears proclaiming the divine King's imminent arrival. Jesus declares that the finger of God is stirring that generation. His coming to Jerusalem is her day of God's own visitation.

Easter brings the crowning point of God's unanswerable intervention into man's experience. At Pentecost once more the divine invades the human. On the Damascus road, God steps unheralded into Paul's life-story, and the apostolic Church lives in the constant and exciting expectation of an ultimate and final intervention that shall mark the end of the age.

From first to last the New Testament is saturated with this "Advent" faith, this confident expectation and compelling hope of God's continually doing new things. The first Christians lived in this atmosphere of Advent, expecting God to intervene savingly into every situation. God was all about them, and *anything* could happen.

Unlike the gods who lie beside their nectar, careless of mankind, the God of the Bible has stepped forth, and stepped down. He has entered history, has lain within a manger, and walked with men.

The truth of God's coming is not limited to Christ's life and death, or to some far-off age and place. We, too, can live in the atmosphere of Advent, for God is always intervening, constantly breaking into our experience — if we will.

Far too easily we assume a *horizontal* view of Christian faith. We believe that God did something long ago, and ever since the ripples of that great event have spread outwards, levelling through history, reaching across the centuries to touch our lives and wash on past us to the rising generations. That is true. But there is a *vertical* perspective too. God breaks into every age, in every generation, into every life that opens up to Him. The spreading ripples on the pool of history are spattered all the time with the divine rain of inbreaking power and love and grace doing new and refreshing things in each new time.

For the Advent truth is timeless: there is a perpetual coming, a ceaseless intervention of the divine. That is the meaning of the doctrine of the Spirit, and until we appreciate its glorious possibilities we live impoverished lives, too easily exhausted, too soon cast down. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, the experience of the Kingdom always begins with the inbreaking of new life from above. Salvation comes, not by the rearrangement of human motives and resources, but through the invasion of a divine initiative with superhuman energies.

There lies the Christian hope for old men (like Nicodemus), for old churches, for an aging world. God stands not aloof: He still breaks in. We celebrate each Christmas the perpetual invasion of the liberating forces of the Advent Christ!

The meditation printed above appears in a new life of our Lord entitled *The Stranger of Galilee*, written by R. E. O. White and published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960.

To those many who sustain this Journal through the year, to the publisher, to the loyal family of readers, and to the gracious Lord whose favor, we believe, rests upon our efforts, we the Editors offer our hearty thanks.

Toward a Reformed Epiphany Season

by James O. Handley, Jr.

IT MAY BE SOMEWHAT of a surprise to the readers, as it was to me, that our Lord's birth was celebrated at least a century before the appearance of that festival on December 25 called Christmas. Oscar Cullmann in his brilliant study "The Origin of Christmas" (in his volume *The Early Church*) gives us the following description of an Egyptian papyrus dating back to the early fourth century:

> . . . which contains a kind of liturgical formula intended for a church choir, with the liturgical parts for the choir to sing in response to the reading by the priest. The numerous finger-marks show that the leaf must have been much used. It is clear from another liturgical note on the reverse side that it concerns the feast of Epiphany of January 5th-6th, when Christ's baptism in the Jordan was commemorated. The fragment concerns that part of the festival devoted to the birth of Christ. This interesting papyrus contains the oldest Christmas liturgy we possess, and in it Christmas is still observed on the night of January 5th-6th. To the reading of the biblical account of the story of Christ's birth at Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, and the return to Nazareth, the choir responded by singing the following Greek hymn:
>
> *"Born at Bethlehem*
> *Brought up at Nazareth*
> *Dwelt in Galilee."*
>
> Then the priest would have read the story of the Magi from the Gospel of Matthew, and the choir responded:
>
> *"We have seen a sign from heaven,*
> *the shining star."*
>
> After this the Christmas story from Luke 2 was read, and the choir responded:
>
> *"Shepherds in the field tending their flocks were amazed, they fell on their knees, and sang: Glory to the Father.*
> *Halleluiah.*
> *Glory to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.*
> *Halleluiah. Halleluiah. Halleluiah."*

One can see that according to that ancient liturgy, Epiphany had more than a nativity theme. It celebrated the various outstanding initial manifestations of the Word become flesh; that is, our Lord's birth, His adoration by the Magi, His baptism, and (as other documents reveal) His first miracle at Cana. Approximately, the much used and key New Testament word *epiphaneia* (Greek for "manifestation" or "appearing") was used to designate that whole cluster of early events which centered in the manifestation of God to the world in Jesus the Christ. Sometimes, however, this festival season received the title Holy Day of Lights, which reflected particularly John's description of the Incarnation as the shining of "The True Light" in this world's darkness.

This richly complex nature of the original Epiphany is attested by many of the early Christian apologists, theologians, and preachers. Especially interesting are the Epiphany hymns of Ephraim the Syrian (d. 323), who is probably the pioneer in the use of hymns in corporate worship. Here are some examples:

> *In the Birth of the Son light dawned. . .*
> *His light shone out over the East;*
> *Persia was enlightened by the Star:*
> *His Epiphany gave good tidings to her and invited her.*
>
> *The heavenly ranks were silent as they stood,*
> *And the Bridegroom went down into the Jordan;*
> *The Holy One was baptized and straightway went up,*
> *And His Light shone forth in the world. . .*

BUT WHILE THE WESTERN CHURCH, as well as the Eastern, was celebrating the Epiphany on January 6, before the Council of Nicea, it gradually developed a distinctive nativity festival now known as Christmas. The West also slowly shifted the focus of Epiphany to the coming of the Magi. In the East, on the other hand, Epiphany became centered in the baptism of Christ and it retains that emphasis to this day. The Western tradition finds expression in the Book of Common Prayer, the work of the English Reformers. January 6 is there designated "The Epiphany, or The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles." In the following six Sundays of the Epiphany season the Book of Common Prayer celebrates many of the other events which belonged to the original Epiphany. The reader may remember that my former article on Epiphany (*Reformed Journal*, January, 1960) discussed the traditonal Western treatment, with its emphasis on the Magi. I now realize that the Western tradition represents an impoverishment of the original Epiphany for it reduces that festival to something of a duplicate of Christmas.

The Western tradition partly explains why Christmas, developed out of Epiphany, has eclipsed that original festival and become central in our observance of the Incarnation. One cannot avoid regret-

ting that the Reformers were not more acquainted with the ancient Epiphany. Then they would have perhaps been moved to restore it to the Western Church. The consequence, undoubtedly, would have been our more sustained and satisfying participation in the meaning, joy, and wonder of our Lord's manifestation among us. Perhaps, as sons of the Reformers, we can correct this deficiency in their liturgical work. Of course, before attempting to do so, we must be convinced that such an undertaking would be theologically sound, constructive to our worship, and relevant for our witness.

IN MY JUDGMENT the basic way toward such a conviction is an inquiry into the origins of Epiphany and Christmas. After all, those festivals have been long suspected by many Protestants. The charge is often heard that they are pagan in origin and also represent the accommodations and concessions of the Medieval Church to non-Christian customs. Of course, Christmas trees and Christmas lights, charming as they are to our children, do derive from non-Christian sources. The vital point is that while Christmas and Epiphany were stimulated by certain ancient pagan festivals, their character and meaning developed out of the theological reflection of the church. No one has argued this point more persuasively than Oscar Cullmann:

> The impulse to celebrate Christ's birth did not come from outside, but was a consequence of theological reflection on the fact of our redemption, the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ and condescended to our estate. . . . it is entirely in accordance with the faith of the New Testament to make the birth of Christ the object of a special Church festival. The evangelists Matthew, Luke and John dwell on this event, seeking each in his own way to shed light on it; and in doing so they are only spokesmen of the Community which handed down their traditions. . . . Moreover, the liturgical form of the oldest festival of Christ's birth, as seen when we were discussing the vivid descriptions of the Epiphany feast, betrays specifically Christian features. The central idea expressed in liturgical form, that Christ, the light of the world, enters into the darkness, is certainly not derived from the festival of Mithras, the "unconquered sun-god." ("The Origin of Christmas," in *The Early Church*, pp. 34-35.)

Cullmann is far from alone in his conclusions. Convincing evidence for an Epiphany festival in the first-century church can be found in the New Testament studies of A. A. MacArthur (*The Evolution of the Christian Year*, pp. 60-69) and Philip Carrington (*The Primitive Christian Calendar*, pp. 53f.). At the very least we should now be free from any embarrassment over our observance of Christmas. Furthermore, we have such strong theological and Biblical support as to move us towards the adoption of a whole Epiphany or manifestation season — but more of that later.

OUR SEARCH INTO THE ORIGINS of the Christmas and Epiphany festivals would be quite incomplete without discovering the significance of their respective dates — December 25 and January 6. It is obvious to any reader of the New Testament that the Gospel records provide no helpful clue to the day and year of our Lord's birth. Some early Christians indulged in all sorts of speculations, but these are devoid of any historical value and received no official recognition from the undivided church. In fact, there was rather an official indifference to the time-date of Christ's birth. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the early churches fixed their attention upon the soteriological meaning of Christ's manifestations and upon giving expression to that meaning in their worship. Nor did it bother them to celebrate those manifestations — birth, Magi, baptism, etc. — simultaneously rather than historically as we moderns would. Whence, then, the dates of December 25 and January 6?

To begin, we must ever remember that the church did not arise and grow in a vacuum, but in an environment at first predominantly Jewish. Apparently, God employed that environment to stimulate the church toward a Christological reconstruction of the Old Testament and Jewish Passover season. The outcome was the glorious Paschal Season or Great Fifty Days (see *Reformed Journal*, May, 1960). A similar process occurred as the Christian church expanded into an environment distinctly Gentile, as in Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. In such places the church found herself seriously and powerfully rivaled by so-called "mystery religions." They were named such because of the "mysteries" or rites through which people imagined they would become reunited with certain gods, such as Osirus, Dionysus, Aeon, and Mithras, who annually died and rose again. In such reunion people believer they could be "saved" or raised to some kind of superhuman or immortal existence. Moreover, the yearly deaths and resurrections of such pagan saviour-gods were linked by the people to the winter solstice, which the non-Christians observed as occurring on December 25. At this time the sun in its course seems to have overcome the lengthening of the hours of darkness; man is blessed with an increase in light and with the results of that increase. To the pagans this natural phenomenon was a cosmic drama of the defeat and renewal of their gods.

Consequently, every year around the time of the winter solstice the Christians were made painfully aware of the organized powers of the anti-christs around them. Necessarily reacting against and witnessing to paganism, the church was driven to deeper reflection upon the meaning of the Incarnation. Out of its resources, the church developed its

own festival, which manifested the true Saviour-Victor-Light-King, Jesus Christ. Specifically, in the East, January 6 was chosen as the date of the Epiphany celebration to offset a great pagan festival on that day in honor of Osirus. On the other hand, in the West, the church was confronted more and more by a cult of the sun, the festival day of which was December 25. The Roman emperors had built a temple to Sol Invictus, the "unconquered sun-god," who annually seemed to prove victorious in his struggle with the powers of darkness. This worship of the sun became even more attractive and powerful by its integration with Mithraism, the ancient Iranian celebration of the birthday of the sun-god Mithras. Particularly alarming was what the Roman legions did with this cult; they worshipped Mithras in the figure of the emperor, whose tent was in their camps and who rode, as the sun, at their head against the forces of darkness, namely, the barbarian hordes from the East and North. So, Caesar Constantius Chlorus, upon his victorious appearing in the streets of London, was glorified on a gold medallion as the Restorer of Eternal Light. Incidentally, his famous son, Constantine the Great, raised as a worshipper of Mithras, was hailed as an essential manifestation of Mithras upon becoming Caesar. Such was the formidable union of religion and government which the Western Church faced. (Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars,* pp. 13-16.)

So the Western Church decided to have a nativity feast to Christ on December 25. This was a deliberate and thoroughly missionary attempt to counter the nativity celebration of Mithras on that date. In the sermons of the fourth-century preachers, such as Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo, we find frequent references to such Old Testament prophecies as Malachi 4:2: "The sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in his wings." In exalting Christ above Mithras and the Roman Caesar, the Christians often proclaimed: "Christ is *our* new sun." Unfortunately, as already observed, this fourth-century nativity festival of the church eventually broke down the rich, complex character of the original Epiphany developed over a century before.

Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., speaking respectively of the Paschal and Epiphany festivals of the church, observes:

> Thus the Christian Year, in its historical development, parallels the actual history of the spread of Christianity, first in its preaching of the gospel among the Jews, then among the Gentiles. It reminds us how the Christian faith has brought together and transformed the highest religious aspirations of all peoples, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision. . . but Christ is all, and in all" (*The Worship of the Church,* p. 116).

MAY I NOW RELATE what we have learned and suggest some possible uses we could make of it? First, the theological content and meaning, as well as the liturgical form, of Christmas and Epiphany are derived from the Apostolic revelation, not from paganism. Second, the choice of the dates of December 25 and January 6 are the result of the collision of the church with the organized religious-social-political forces of paganism. As I see it, then, the over-all conclusion is this: Like the Paschal Season, the Epiphany Season is an integral part of the Christian theological reflection, preaching, and worship which characterized classical Christianity. If so, how we Reformed Christians have made ourselves poor in celebrating our Lord's glorious manifestations by devoting ony one special service a year to His birth! Thinking we were so close, how far we have drifted from the early churches in this respect! Surely I am not alone in such sentiments. What, then, could we do? A number of possibilities occur to me and probably others will occur to the readers.

(1) We could merely add an Epiphany service on January 6 to our list of "Special Days Observed by Public Worship." That would at least give us as many services devoted to the Incarnation as we now hold for the New Year, which, so far as I know, is utterly secular in origin. The Christian "New Year" begins on Easter Sunday.

(2) Worthy of our consideration is the impressive effort of A. A. MacArthur, who has worked out a six-Sunday season devoted to the incarnation and climaxed by Christmas Day. Then, as part of that season which he designated "Our Lord's Ministry and Passion," there is a nine-Sunday Epiphany season. (For details see *The Christian Year and Lectionary Reform,* p. 69.)

(3) Although it follows the Western treatment of Christmas and Epiphany, the scheme adopted by the English and German Reformers still has much more value than the two suggested above. It does, however, divorce Christmas from Epiphany and eclipses the latter in effect. (See *Book of Common Prayer,* pp. x-xv, for the exact layout of the Sundays.)

(4) Perhaps it would be possible to restore to some degree the ancient Epiphany festival and its season. This would entail an evening vigil on January 5 followed by an early-morning celebration of our Lord's birth, the coming of the Magi, and His presentation in the Temple. Then for a number of consecutive Sundays the "manifestation" theme would be continued by treating His baptism, His first miracle at Cana, the transfiguration, and His final advent. This whole Epiphany season would be preceded by a four- or six-Sunday period dealing with the Old Testament preparation for the coming of the Son of God. During that "advent season," if one wishes to call it such, December 25 would

be simply ignored, as it was done for over a century before the appearance of that festival in the West. It may well be, however, that Christmas is so entrenched in our American customs and sentiments that such a scheme would make us too "different."

Of this we may be sure: if under the Spirit of Christ we properly apply ourselves, we can construct a Reformed Epiphany season which will immeasurably strengthen our individual lives, corporate worship, and witness to this neo-pagan age. We have the resources available to us. Why not use them?

Morality and the Artist

by Charles J. Miller

WHY HAS THE REFORMED community in America produced so few creative artists and writers? In theory it should not be thus because the Calvinist world-and-life view includes a broad arena for the Christian who would write or paint or compose. The history of the Reformed movement, however, is generally the story of a reluctance to accept any significant esthetic innovation. In contrast, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and even Catholicism have spawned a vital esthetic life. The image of Calvinism, in contrast, even to itself, is one of austerity and plainness. For centuries walls were barren of paintings and singing of accompaniment. Even now, fiction stands on few Reformed bookshelves and poetry rests on few nightstands. Truth has been confused with the real and godliness with homeliness. Beauty of design and grace of language are confounded with modernism.

This cultural sterility is in large measure not deliberate nor theological but the result of the lower-class origins of many Calvinist and orthodox Christian communities. Some Calvinist groups such as the American Presbyterians faced this situation more than a century ago. We now must face the problem ourselves. First, we must attempt to determine what are the Reformed standards of esthetics and, second, having agreed in our own minds, we must be considerate of members of our spiritual fellowship who utterly reject our conclusions.

THE BATTLE OF STANDARDS is, of course, perennial, but it has become particularly acute during the last two generations in the Reformed and evangelical community as the result of universal and mass education, which have made literature and art the province of every man. Furthermore, with mere acquaintance, each man considers himself a critic. Many confuse the esthetic standards of a past generation, those extolled during their youth, with what is Christian. As the result, Christian painting today remains identified with the exaggerated and romantic tradition of the nineteenth century still found in many Sunday-school papers and Bible-story books. Christian fiction still bears the imprint of Grace Livingston Hill with its avoidance of evil, its assumption that wrong will not prevail in the face of the righteous, and its romantic simplification of the conversion experience. Even hymnology in orthodox Christian circles has virtually died because few can write with artistic integrity in the idiom of most of the great church hymns, a mode of expression which died half a century ago. What had been a supremely natural manner of expressing religious devotion became stereotyped, formal, and, in our day, artificial. To sanctify late-nineteenth-century standards as Christian standards, as is popularly done in orthodox Christian circles, not only breeds artistic hypocrisy but also shows an ignorance of how alien to the Christian tradition many of those standards are.

Such a judgment is perhaps cavalier because Scripture, the Protestant's sole rule of faith and practice, is so silent on the subject of esthetics. Furthermore, theologians often forget that the classic Reformed creeds have nothing to say about the arts and even limit the sufficiency of Scripture to "whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation." As in the case of science, Scripture does not serve as a handbook but merely provides a few guideposts. Music, ritual, architecture, and even the dance are considered normal expressions of the worship of God. Literary grace certainly is not frowned upon. Even some of the most humble accounts are embellished with graphic parables and figures of speech. However, even though Scripture does establish the frame of reference in which a creative artist works, it provides no principles or precepts to govern the esthetic phase of his expression.

Furthermore, Scripture makes no pretense of supplying models for the artist. Although most of the modern translations of Scripture are brilliant literary productions — Luther's and the King James have literally formed the language of the nation — the Hebrew and Greek originals are in many cases very imperfect models, showing grammatical barbarisms, inelegance, and obscurity. Even judged by the literary standards of the time in which they were written, many parts of Scripture are only passable as literature.

Nevertheless, attempts have been made both by the pious and the impious to find in Scripture literary models for contemporary esthetic expression. Inevitably the results are questionable, being plagued by the suggestion of sacrilege and of esthetic barbarism. This is to be expected because of the difficulty of translating Hebrew and Greek literary forms into something comprehensible to a contemporary reader. In fact, the literary structure of Hebrew poetry is so obscure that many Christians prefer translating the Psalms from their original form into the metrically rhymed tradition of European literature.

Not only does Scripture fail to provide esthetic principles and models for the creative artist, but even some of its subject matter is not considered morally acceptable by the contemporary Christian. It is an irony that in the name of Christian propriety certain Biblical stories are considered inappropriate subjects for the painter or writer. Paul's language in Romans 1 is almost medically blunt. The sensuality of the Song of Solomon has caused many devout Christians to question its canonicity. How many more illustrations could be added: the incest of Lot and his daughters, the woman at the well, the several references to pissing against the wall, the adultery and murder involved in the affair of David and Bathsheba, Abram selling his wife to the Pharaoh as a concubine, the rape of Dinah and Tamar, the temptation of Joseph by Potiphar's wife, the test that made Esther queen. The list could be extended to include a complete catalog of sins, major and minor.

Scripture, in this area, forms a confusing pattern and a scant guide for the creative Christian writer or artist.

AS AN ALTERNATIVE, or at least as a supplementary guide, some Christians demand that would-be artists and writers in the Reformed tradition must follow the best standards of the whole body of literature and the arts. In some respects this may be an even more unsatisfactory standard. Shakespeare as a contemporary playwright would find no acceptance in orthodox Christendom because of the persistence of swearing, of repeated biological references, of salty Anglo-Saxon language, and of self-apparent humanism. The *Iliad*, based on the abduction and seduction of Helen and conspicuously pagan, could scarcely meet the minimum standards. Chaucer, if he were not long established, might well run into difficulties with the post office. Dante's *Divine Comedy* would be condemned for its conspicuous Romanism, its beatification of Aristotle, and its delight in glorifying the sins of those condemned to the Inferno. Plato speaks favorably of homosexuality and disparagingly of democracy. Even Petrarch and Tolstoy might well be excluded. One might wonder if a Michelangelo or a Rubens or a Wagner or a Chopin would be more acceptable. Few of the esthetic models deservedly praised in the classroom would be acceptable if they were offered as a representative expression of Christian art.

Are there other models which form a Reformed or at least Christian esthetic tradition which are more worthy of being emulated? Such a list might include Bunyan, Sill, Francis Thompson, the Brownings, Lanier, Donne, Herrick, Milton, and possibly an Eliot, a Chesterton, a Graham Green, or even a George Eliot. (The temptation to include Dickens and Thackery must be resisted because, even though their writings seem to mirror contemporary Christian ideals, their private lives were conspicuously reprehensible, though as much might be said of several others listed above.) Certainly these authors should be recognized for their attempt to present their Christian convictions in artistic expression, but it must be recognized that they do not represent a separate and unique Christian tradition, much less a Reformed one, but that they are writers, using the contemporary idiom of their day, to express their personal Christian perspective of life. They were, and some still are, part of the total stream of life, not a discrete segment. There is no Reformed or uniquely Christian tradition of esthetics.

The gap between what is called Christian literature today as manifest in the so-called Christian novel and poetry, and what is literature written by Christians, is unpassably broad. Much of the former is insignificant, false, and utopian, and will fade with the paper on which it is printed; some of the latter, in so far as it succeeds in addressing the contemporary mind in terms that are understood, however confusing to the typical adherent of orthodox Christendom, may persist. Much of its effectiveness depends on being abreast of the stream of cultural change, being in the *avant garde*, rather than safely following the mode that is passing. Effective literature seldom soothes its readers with standards and forms that are already well accepted, but it constantly searches for new modes of expression to make both graphic and literate the ideas of a new generation, including its reaction to a living Christian faith.

Yet a distinctive mark remains that separates the Christian as artist from the rest of the creative community — a Christian perspective of man and the world. This finds itself most conspicuously in three truths: the sovereignty of God as shown in the creation and the moral order; the fall of man and his depravity; and the ultimate hope for man only in the redemption by Christ. Paradoxically, artists who are not Reformed or even nominally Christian have accepted various elements of the Christian perspective, particularly the second proposition, and many Christians concerned with the broadest expression of the first, in dealing with the beauty of God's nature or the aspects of the love

of a man for a maid, as in the Biblical account of Esther, may give but slight evidence of their Christian commitment.

IN THE FIELD of the graphic arts and music, the relationship between Scripture and the Christian perspective becomes even more tenuous. Here association rather than principle is usually the basis for popular judgment. One may well remember that a Roman basilica with all of its connotations of paganism was eventually accepted as the norm for a Christian church building. The Gothic cathedral, which by its very name shows how it was initially condemned as uncouth and pagan, was to become the highest embodiment of the Christian commitment in architecture. Even Calvin, though he stripped the Gothic cathedral in Geneva of its Catholic images and paintings, never condemned the building itself, which clearly reflected a Medieval rather than a Reformed perspective. For him, the association either had been broken or was irrelevant. The early New England type of church building, which during the nineteenth century symbolized Unitarianism, has during our generation lost its negative connotation and has again become acceptable Reformed church architecture. Even more surprising, the naturalistic functionalism of the German Bauhaus school, which twenty years ago was openly defended by its proponents as representing the agnosticism of the time, is now not only acceptable but considered desirable for Catholic, Lutheran, and even Reformed churches.

On the other hand, all too often, Christian standards are equated with being twenty years out of date. Such standards, frequently glorified by the title "conservative" are purely humanistic, using the majority opinion of men, sometimes even godly men, rather than the Scriptures or a total Christian world-and-life view as a standard. The transitory nature of such arbitrary standards is apparent in the rapid changes in the attitude toward the cutting and curling of women's hair, somber clothes, lipstick, and jewelry, perhaps even musical standards, motion pictures, and Sunday activities.

Unfortunately, in some fields changes in these arbitrary standards are slow and those who would violate them are accused of secularism or worse. What confusion has developed! Because of an accident of history, the Christian esthetic tradition today is supposed to place its prime emphasis on literalism, on representing something not too unpleasant in a realistic sense, in being true rather than fictitious. Ironically, these standards are substantially the same as those imposed for ideological reasons in Communist Russia. There these standards are recognized for what they are: a reflection of a naturalistic and material universe.

In contrast, non-representational art is condemned in Christian circles as paganism, even though it has been associated closely with the most vigorous monotheistic religious traditions of Islam and Judaism, where it was a device to minimize the temptations of idolatry. Art as pure design and poetry as a game of words and sounds stand high in monotheistic folk lore. Similarly, modern painting which attempts to be ideological and symbolic is greeted with storms of criticism and is pushed aside as being unintelligible, even though it revives the modes of the devoutly Christian Medieval art. The literary equivalent, symbolic poetry, though drawing inspiration from Daniel, the Revelation of John, and Bunyan, is cast aside as meaningless nonsense.

UNFORTUNATELY, no creative artist who is a Christian can afford to ignore these arbitrary judgments because he must live in fellowship with his critics and because the growth of the Body of Christ and not his own personal gratification must be his primary drive. He may well realize that at this time any graphic presentation of sin, even when it is condemned by implication, may be considered in bad taste. Even a reference to sexual reproduction, and certainly to fornication or adultery, falls under the ban. Swearing and blasphemy, however accurately they dramatize evil, are unacceptable. Anything that might imply an attack on either the government and democracy or the institutionalized church and its leaders seemingly has no place in the vocabulary of a Christian. *Lèse majesté* remains a sin. One may well wonder how grossly the Scriptures would be rewritten if contemporary Christian standards were applied to them. One may also wonder if, perhaps, the prohibition of the discussion of sin is not rooted in Liberal optimism rather than in the orthodox Christian tradition.

Yet reluctance to accept the conventional norms of polite Christian society should not be interpreted as willingness to give license to the Christian artist. "To be all things to all men" obviously means utilizing pragmatically any man's standards but certainly not accepting them as one's own. "To avoid being a stumbling block to a weaker brother" surely cannot imply accepting the standards of the weakest Christian in order not to offend him. To think only on pure and lovely things must never exclude a concern for the sinner nor a constant reminder of the most unlovely of all scenes, the death of Christ.

However, when all reservations are made, the Christian must recognize that he stands not in one world but in two. He has an obligation to rise above not only the conventional judgments of the Christian community but also above those of the contemporary esthetic tradition. He must stand always as a man of faith. Evil may be a legitimate subject, but only when it is clearly presented as wrong; the beauties of creation, when they show the perfection of God; and hope and promise, when they are ultimately found in God.

"This Infallible Rule"

by Leonard Verduin

IN THE CIRCLES served by this journal there is currently going on a discussion of the idea of the infallibility of the Scriptures. In this discussion the Belgic Confession's Article VII is sure to be quoted, the passage that speaks of the Bible as *"ceste reigle infallible."* This is the passage that has given rise to the expression "this infallible rule."

It will be useful to make a study of the question as to just what the author of the Confession, Guido de Brès, meant by this expression. Specifically what did he mean with the word *"infallible"*?

As everybody knows, words have a history. As they run down the lanes of time they sometimes widen out; sometimes they narrow down; often they change their direction. The word "marshall," for example, calls to mind in contemporary man a person of a certain rank in the military; a short millennium ago the word stood for a stableboy.

Words are complicated things. They are symbols whereby one man tries to convey to another man a mental image. And because no two men are exactly alike, therefore the transfer of mental pictures by means of words is never an exact science. Men must always be satisfied with an approximately correct transfer. Human speech has in it always an element of risk. The nearer two people are to being alike as to historic conditioning the smaller the margin of error is likely to be. A doctor, for instance, runs less risk of not communicating successfully when he talks with a colleague than when he speaks with a carpenter. But even so, speech is a venturesome undertaking. A voice that reaches across centuries, as the voice of Guido de Brès does, is almost certain to be only relatively successful in the art of communication.

The problem of communicating becomes more complicated still when translation is involved. Since every language reflects the experience of a people and since no two peoples have had the same experience therefore translation is a difficult thing. If communication is a hazard then translation is hazard squared. The expression "this certain rule" is a translation. It is entirely possible that as such the phrase does not mean for us precisely what *"ceste reigle infallible"* meant for de Brès.

Moreover, languages borrow from other languages; and in the process some change of meaning is almost certain to occur. When two languages borrow from the same donor language there is a very real danger of misunderstanding. The English has borrowed many words from the Latin; so has the French; but it does not follow at all that the English derivative and the French derivative connote the same thing. It is probable that they do not.

To illustrate this point. The story is told that when Lafayette addressed the newly created Congress of the United States he began to say: *"Je demande. . ."* (which in his French meant simply: "I ask"). Upon this an American took the floor to tell the Frenchman that since this was now a free and sovereign country no Frenchman had anything to "demand." Here were two people, each using a word borrowed by his tongue from a common donor language, the Latin; but the meanings of the derived words had drifted far apart.

The words *"ceste reigle infallible"* are the words of a Frenchman who lived four centuries ago. To translate these his words seems very easy and simple: "this infallible rule" rolls out of one's pen almost without effort; for *"ceste"* is French, old French, for "this"; *"reigle"* is French, archaic French, for "rule; and *"infallible"* is French, antiquated French, for "infallible." What could be simpler?

But he who knows the hazards of translating may want to take a second look. It could be that de Brès' *"infallible"* is not exactly the same as our "infallible." If it is not, then we have mistranslated; and to mistranslate is to falsify. A second look is in this instance by no means a luxury item.

THE ENGLISH WORD "infallible" has a long, long history. It comes to us across the span of all recorded history. It had literally traveled around the globe when it became a loan-word in the English language.

Ignoring for the moment the negative particle "in," we find that "fallible" has its roots way back in the Sanskrit *sphal,* a word meaning "to vacillate, waver, reel, stagger." From the Sanskrit the word passed into the Greek, where we have the derivative *sphallein,* a word meaning "to cause to stumble, to trip." Next the word appears in the Latin, where, having sloughed off the initial "s," it has given rise to the verb *fallo* (of which the other principal parts are *fallere, fefelli, falsus*). This Latin verb has a wide variety of meaning, including "to trip, to dupe, to cheat, to elude, to mislead," etc., etc. From the Latin the word passed into French, where its principal offspring may be seen in two related verbs, *"faillir" and "falloir,"* both of which have a considerable spread of meaning. This is the stock out of which de Brès' *"infallible"* descends.

The plain man will already realize that it is not at all a simple matter to determine precisely what

de Brès had in mind when he wrote *"ceste reigle infallible,"* and he will see that to translate it into modern English may be not altogether simple. To translate by sound is in all events not necessarily to translate responsibly.

In a practical way it may be said that in the French heritage from the Sanskrit *sphal* two ideas are quite prominent. One of these is the idea of falling-short-of-the-goal; such a word as *faillité* (the state of being bankrupt) illustrates the general thrust of the words of this family. The modern spelling of de Brès' *"infallible"* is *infaillible"*; and this spelling brings out the idea of non-failing. A line from the writings of Pascal will give the reader the feel of this word *"infaillible"*; he wrote: *"La grace de Jésus-Christ fait qu'on persevere infailliblement dans la piété,"* which may be translated: "The grace of Jesus Christ brings about that a man perseveres without fail in the devout way of life." The meaning of *"infailliblement"* is tending-to-preclude-failure, in this instance failure in the business of living the Christian life. "Infallible" is simply "infaillible."

That the Bible is "infaillible" is, of course, confessed by all evangelical Christians; all agree that it achieves what it sets out to do. It is never thwarted in its enterprise. It never fails of its undertaking.

The Bible itself teaches that the Word of God is "infaillible." The *locus classicus* is perhaps Isaiah 55:10, 11, where we read: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." Could anything be plainer? Just as unlikely is it that the Word of God shall fail as that the rain will fail to green up mesquite and sagebrush country. The Word of God is "infaillible."

Is this perhaps what de Brès had in mind with his *"ceste reigle infallible"*? We shall see.

A SECOND IDEA that is prominent in the French derivatives of the Sanskrit parent-word is that of *falisfying*. The Latin *fallo* has given us the English "fallacious." It will be recalled that one of the principal parts of the Latin verb *fallo* is *falsus*. The idea then is not-dealing-falsely. The Bible may be called "infallible" because it does not deal deceitfully. There are English derivatives that have this same general meaning. "False" testimony is testimony that misleads intentionally; a "false" coin is a coin that was made in order to fool men; to "falisfy" a will is to tamper with a testament for purposes of deceit. The quality of not-misleading-intentionally is a second and very common idea contained in the concept of "infallible."

It need hardly be said that all Christians worthy of the name acclaim with conviction that the Scriptures are "infallible" in this sense of the word. This quality of the Word follows from the very nature of Him who gave it. He is one who cannot lie. He hates all false words. False coins and weights are an abomination to Him. He hates every false way; and He asks angrily, "What shall be done with thee, thou false tongue?" He will be a swift witness to false swearers. False prophets His soul hateth. And He has issued a blanket prohibition against bearing false witness. It goes without saying that words emanating from such a falsification-hating Being will be infallible words, words that do not and cannot falisfy, cannot and do not fool.[1]

Can it be that this is what Guido de Brès had in mind when he wrote *"ceste reigle infallible"?* We shall see.

AND WE SHALL see now.

It must be remembered first of all that de Brès did not simply declare that the Bible is *"infallible."* The sentence in which the much-discussed word occurs is a sentence that begins with *"Pourtant"* (a word that can be translated with "because of which"); and no sentence beginning with that word can stand alone. It is tied to that which goes before. We must therefore seek to grasp the whole argument, the argument that presently brings to de Brès' mind the expression *"ceste reigle infallible."* When we look at the whole argument then we notice that in it two things are compared, or rather, contrasted.

On the one hand are the utterances of men; on the other, the utterances of God. The utterances of men are utterances proceeding from beings who are *"d'eux mesmes menteurs, et plus vain que la vanité mesme"* ("of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself"). Because they issue from such an inferior source these utterances must yield the floor to the utterances that issue from a certain, much superior source; the "writings of men," says de Brès, must not be "considered of equal value" with the divine Scripture. Why not? It is because the latter has a quality which the former lacks and is free from a defect the former displays (defects

1. Here are two passages in the French of de Brès's day in which the two meanings of "infallible" — non-failing and non-falsifying — are nicely illustrated. The first passage is from *Brève Résolution sur les disputes de nôtre temps quant aux sacraments* by John Calvin: "Vu que les temoignages . . . sont vrais et infaillibles, qu'il n'y a aucun doute qu'il n'accomplisse en nous tout ce qu'il figure par les sacraments. . . ." Here the *infallible* quality of the *temoignages* precludes that they should fail to accomplish in us that which is intended. The second passage is from *Confession de foi au nom des églises réformées de France*: "Car puisque Dieu est la vérité infaillible, il est certain qu'il ne nous veut point amuser à quelque vaine apparance, mais que la substance de ce que les sacraments signifient y est conjointe." Here *"infaillible"* is the quality that precludes that God should *amuser* us (i.e., beguile us). Because God is infaillible He cannot fool us — that is the idea conveyed.

such as you must expect from beings that are *"d'eux mesmes menteurs, et plus vain que la vanité mesme"*), in other words, it is because men's words are "fallible" (that is, according to the context, both *false* and *vain*) and God's Words are "infallible" (that is, again according to the context, both *not-false* and *not-vain*). "Infallible" is not-false and not-vain. And that is just another way of saying "non-falsifying" and "non-failing" — precisely the two ideas which we have seen earlier to inhere in the French *"infallible."*

For it must be remembered that "vain" is essentially the same as "given to failure." The Bible says that a horse is a "vain" thing for safety — because it will fail in the assignment of assuring safety. To suffer many things in "vain" is to undergo them abortively. To bestow labor in "vain" is to do the work without reaping the contemplated harvest. Hence men are said to be "more vain than vanity itself"; therefore their speech is "fallible." But the speech of God is not vain; it is therefore to be called "infallible."

It appears, then, that de Brès ascribed the quality of being "infallible" to the Scriptures because they are not-given-to-falsification as well as not-handicapped-by-vanity; in the language of the street, because they neither fool nor flub — as the speech of man must do, seeing that man is "of himself a liar and more vain than vanity itself."

SINCE THIS IS ostensibly the idea de Brès sought to convey by his *"ceste reigle infallible"* we are faced with the question as to how we can best express his thought in our language. Because de Brès' *"infallible"* has a cognate in our language, the English word "infallible," the half-dozing translator would be likely to use it. But that would be proper only if and when it has the same connotation — which it does not have.

It speaks well for the earliest translators that they were aware of the danger of translating by sound. Just as soon as the first printing of *"ceste reigle infallible"* was on sale, men were already seeking to cast the expression into a Dutch equivalent. These men were thoroughly bilingual, knowing Flemish as well as French (recall that they were Belgians). And what did they do? Did they reach for the cognate and write *"desen onfeylbaerē regel"?* They did not. Evidently because the cognate was not capable of conveying the idea of *"ceste reigle infallible"* they avoided it and drafted an etymologically unrelated word to do the job; they wrote *"desen onwedersprekelicken regel."*

It was not until 1583 that an intrepid soul rendered de Brès, *"infallible"'* with an etymologically related word; in that year Arent Cornelissen printed *"desen onfaelgeerlicken regel."* He was able to use this *"onfaelgeerlick"* because it is closely alike to de Brès' term; it too means *"infaillible."*

Sixty years after the Confession first hit the street, men set themselves to say in Latin what de Brès had said in French. They had to watch their step in this assignment, for Latin was the language of the scholarly world, the world that is sensitive to exact shades of meaning. They had to be on their guard against such things as translating by sound. And what did they write? *"Certissima hac regula"*! ("This most certain rule.") That translation passed inspection; it passed without criticism across the synodical table at Dordt.

It is true that a Dutch rendering was also supplied at Dordt. Here for the first time the cognate was allowed to enter; for there men wrote: *"dezen onfeilbaren regel."* Whether this lack of scholarly precision was due to the fact that this was to be a popular edition of the creed we do not know. It may very well have been. But it is certain that the wisdom and cautious restraint that had guided the translators hitherto was thrown to the winds.

Our problem is, however, not how to render *"ceste reigle infallible"* into Dutch or into Latin, but into modern English. This will not be easy to do. To translate by similarity of sound is the easiest way, of course; whether it is the correct way is another matter.

At this point it is significant that the first people to try to say in English what de Brès had said in French detoured the cognate. They, too, chose an etymologically unrelated word. Their translation, done in the Refugee settlement in London (the same settlement therefore that supplied most of our liturgical formularies) rendered the phrase in question with "this most certain rule."

Who it was that supplied the English translation printed in the Psalter-Hymnal is not precisely clear to the present writer. He does know, however, that it is far from excellent, abounding in examples of translation by sound. (A case in point came to the attention of Synod recently. The "we detest" of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession was intended to be, but is not, a suitable rendering of de Brès' *nous detestons."* Manifestly the temptation to translate by sound was too much for this translator.)

Then what are we to do? The English word "infallible" apparently conveys to the ears of men of our generation, a generation deeply influenced by the so-called scientific method and its flair for meticulous precision, the notion of "meeting-the-requirement-of-scientific-accuracy." When men of our civilization hear the word "infallible" they have visions of slide rules and test tubes and infinitesimally close tolerances. Just about all that has been written about the word "infallible" has been written from this vantage point.

It would be extremely interesting, if it were possible, to let Guido de Brès read all that has of late been written in connection with his now famous phrase, and to ask him to settle our argument. We are not going to speculate as to what he would say.

We may be sure, however, that he would at the first shrug his mighty shoulders (he was known for his "high back"); for the question would come to him from a society in which he would feel awfully strange. His was the pre-scientific age, an age in which even the most fastidious and fussy might spell one and the same word four different ways on the same page. (Imagine the confusion and pandemonium that would result if we took such liberties with words!)

One could wish that he knew what de Brès would have said about infallibility in the sense of evincing-scientific-precision. But we do not know what he would say. For he has not spoken to that issue. It did not occur to him, in all probability.

He did, of course, speak of "liars." But to lie is not the same as to speak without trying for scientific precision. To speak as men who are *"d'eux mesmes menteurs"* is to speak with the intention of falsifying. To speak without modern man's fetish for close tolerances is a horse of a different color. That the Bible does not falsify and does not fail of its mission, of this de Brès has spoken his mind.

Whether de Brès would say that it is axiomatic that the Bible always speaks with scientific accuracy and precision we do not know. Whether he would say that in order in its particular mission to be non-failing and non-falisfying the Bible must in all its details satisfy modern man's disproportionate passion for meticulous and micrometrical precision, that is a thing we do not know. Guido de Brès must have known that as to exact historical sequences the Bible does not cater to said passion for precision (witness the fact that it presents two different sequences in the temptation scene of the Christ); whether he would say that it is an intolerable hypothesis that this same unconcern for exactness may reveal itself elsewhere, in reporting numbers for instance, this also we do not know.

Election and Arbitrariness

by James Daane

THE FIRST MISCONSTRUCTION of the doctrine of election discussed by Professor Berkouwer in his *Divine Election* regards God's act of election as an arbitrary act of absolute power. Although classical Reformed theology rejects the notion of arbitrariness, together with the notion that election is an act of mere absolute power, both notions have arisen at various times within the Reformed community. They have arisen when men have gone beyond the Biblical limits and have sought an understanding of election outside the boundaries of faith.

Election understood as an arbitrary act arises in connection with the recognition that the ground of the elect man's election does not lie in the man himself. He is saved by grace, by God's free and gracious choice. The ground of his election, therefore, lies not in himself but in God. This truth, however, does not lead to the idea that election is an arbitrary act. On the contrary, that idea is excluded: in the knowledge of his faith the elect man knows that he is saved not by an arbitrary but by a *gracious* act of God. What is gracious is never arbitrary, for what is arbitrary is not gracious. The Christian knows that if the love and grace of God by which he is saved are regarded in terms of arbitrariness, they lose their loving and gracious character.

Whence, then, comes the notion that election is an arbitrary act, an act of God to be explained only in terms of naked, unlimited power? It emerges when theologians attempt to account for the non-election of the reprobate in a similar manner, i.e., by seeking its ground in God alone. As it is imperative to maintain that the ground of the elect man's election is in God alone in order to retain the sovereignty of grace, so it is thought necessary to maintain that the ground of reprobation is in God alone in order to retain the idea of divine sovereignty. What is quite overlooked in this theological reflection is the transfer of concern. What begins as a concern for the sovereignty of grace becomes a concern for bare sovereignty.

An argument commonly used to prove that the ground of reprobation must be in God, not in man, if God's sovereignty is to be retained, is this: All men are sinners, therefore sin cannot be the ground of reprobation, for if it were, all men would be reprobates.[1] However, if reprobation is not that rejection of God's justice grounded in man's sin, reprobation is indeed an arbitrary act of naked divine power.

It should be observed that in this kind of theological thought the free sovereignty of God is supported by appeal to *necessity*. This is like appealing to the wolves to protect the sheep! If man's

1. Thus John Murray: "It is not because men are sinners that they are passed by. If that were the case, then all men would be passed by." Again, "Sin is not the ground upon which some are passed by and are therefore non-elect . . ." (Quoted by C. Van Til in his *The Defense of the Faith*, p. 414). Indeed, Murray asserts that it is reprobation as not grounded in sin which bespeaks a great concern for the sovereignty of God. *Ibid.*, p. 415.

sin were the ground of reprobation, God — so runs the argument — would not be sovereign, for He would not be the whole ground and explanation of reprobation. God would, moreover, be impotent to save, for all men would be reprobate. Sin, it is urged, cannot be the ground for reprobation for, if it were, logic would necessitate that all men be reprobate and none be saved. Here divine sovereignty is defined within the limitations of the necessities of logic and the nature of sin. This sovereignty is not that revealed by God in Jesus Christ, which can make sin a ground of reprobation *or* overcome this ground in effecting man's salvation, therein revealing its freedom. A second thing to be observed is that a conception of divine sovereignty which cannot allow sin to be a ground for reprobation is one which bespeaks neither the Christian faith nor the grace of God. A Christian could not, without denying his faith and the knowledge of his own sin and its nature, assert that his sin could not be a ground for his rejection. He knows that his sin is quite sufficient to be such a ground. Nor does it bespeak the grace of God: the Christian knows that the very real and terrible possibility of being eternally rejected on the ground of his sin was a possibility that was not actualized and indeed was canceled out only by the grace of God. He cannot say that man's sin *cannot* be a ground for reprobation. Such a thought is foreign to his faith, and he allows it therefore no place in his prayer or worship. He agrees rather with the Canons of Dort that sin can be such a ground for the non-elect and that it once was for him but now is no longer, for the old and very real possibility has by God's grace been displaced by those new possibilities created by the grace of God.

A theology which places the ground of reprobation neither in man's sin nor in God's justice as it relates to sin, but in the sovereign power of God, is operating with an abstract sovereignty, i.e., a sovereignty related neither to God's justice nor His grace. Such a sovereignty is conceived outside the Biblical boundaries of the Christian faith. For this reason this conception of sovereignty violates the Christian knowledge of sin and grace and can find no place within the Christian's religious life of prayer and worship. An arbitrary sovereignty cannot be the object of prayer, something to which one can appeal; nor, because loveless, can it be the object of the Christian's love and worship.

A theology informed by a divine sovereignty which is simply absolute power effecting an election which is arbitrary (i.e., explainable only in terms of absolute power) is an abstract theology, one that is constructed outside the Biblical boundaries. Such an abstract theology can teach things which, in the abstract, are very convincing. It can teach that there are no possibilities except those that are actualized; for example, since Adam did in fact sin there never was a possibility that he would not sin. The claim that there was a real possibility of Adam's not-sinning is said to be an essential denial of the sovereignty of God.

Since we are always in the realm of shadows when we seek to define God's relationship to sin, let us apply this same abstract sovereignty to our personal Christian faith, where matters stand in a clearer light. If there are no real possibilities except those that are actualized, if sin cannot possibly be a ground for reprobation since, if it were, it would have to be actualized in the lives of all men with the consequence that all would necessarily be reprobates, then the Christian in his prayer and worship before God not only could, but should, contend that there never was any possibility of his being lost, that his sin could not possibly be a ground for his rejection by God. But neither the Bible, nor the Christian when speaking out of his faith, speaks in this manner. Speaking out of his faith, the Christian escapes the abstract staticism of an abstract non-historical theology. He knows that once he was lost, but now is saved; he knows that the possibility of his being lost was as real as his sin was real. But in his faith he sees that all things have become new in Christ, that the old and very real possibilities have been abolished and replaced by those new possibilities created by God's grace. He knows that he has by the sovereign and free grace of God been saved from those very real possibilities of his sin, which were once as real as his sin.

By its rejection of that notion of absolute power discussed above (*potentia absoluta*), Reformed theology does not, urges Berkouwer, intend a limitation or restriction of God's power. God is indeed almighty and unconditionally sovereign. What Reformed theology rejects is that particular formulation which asserts that the ultimate explanation of this man's election and that man's rejection is God's naked and unqualified power. God is not sovereign or almighty in the sense of being ultimately and equally the cause of man's salvation and man's damnation. God is sovereign as Father; but He is not sovereign as Father in the sense of the principle of equal ultimacy, i.e., in the same manner the Source, Author and Origin of both salvation and damnation. A theology which desires to be an expression and confession of the Christian faith can only allow a conception of sovereignty which is defined in reference to grace, and hence in reference to man's sin against the grace and goodness of God. An election which is "according to grace" may never be defined as an arbitrary act or as an expression of naked, unqualified power. Similarly, the sovereign power of rejection is not a predicateless *potentia absoluta*, but a power which can only be defined in the context of God's grace and man's sin.

For this reason classical Reformed theology has

always rejected the idea that God created men in order to damn them, that reprobation is an act of pure sovereignty rather than an act of divine judgment upon sin (cf. the Canons of Dort), and that God is the cause of sin (cf. the Canons of Dort). For the same reason classical Reformed theology has always rejected the principle of equal ultimacy, *in whatever form or version,* the principle which urges that ultimately and in the final sense, God in, and of, and by Himself, is the cause, the ground, and the explanation of whatsoever comes to pass in the whole of human history. Classical Reformed theology has sought to remain within the Biblical limits of theological thinking, namely, the boundaries of faith.

Only thus, contends Berkouwer, does Reformed theology avoid the profoundly speculative and rationalistic errors of reducing divine sovereignty to an unqualified power, or ultimate First Cause, which can account for everything, and of regarding an election which is according to grace as an arbitrary act which can explain the double aspects of election.

Thus Bavinck, for example, as Berkouwer points out, rejected the *potentia absoluta.* The sovereignty of God, according to Bavinck, is not only an unlimited power, but also an unlimited wisdom and grace. "He is God and Father at the same time." Similarly, Calvin, says Berkouwer, repeatedly spoke of the impossibility of separating God's power from His justice and holiness — which is precisely what is done by attempting to define sovereignty out of reference to the context of God's grace and man's sinful reaction to it. "That is what he [Calvin] opposed in the horrible notion of the *potentia absoluta,* which entailed for him something altogether different from the fullness and richness of divine sovereignty" (p. 59).

THE VIEW THAT GOD'S elective action is a wholly arbitrary expression of an absolute and unqualified, conditioned-by-nothing power is judged by the Christian faith to be as nothing but a pharisaical expression of self-justification. If the elect may attribute his salvation to arbitrary power, he is delivered from the offense of the gospel, i.e., from acknowledging that he is saved by *grace.* And further, he is then provided with the pharisaical opportunity to assert that his salvation is wholly natural and necessary, for what is wholly arbitrary can be regarded equally well as an event of necessity as an event of chance.

This unbiblical conception of God's sovereign election provides the basis on which the non-elect can claim the right to assert that his reprobation is not based on his sin but on the fact that none can resist God's will — which objection Paul rejects when he asks: "Who are you, a man, to answer back to God?"

The Biblical idea of election renders impossible this pharisaical endeavor of self-righteousness and self-justification. It does so by teaching us that the divine sovereignty which elects or reprobates is not an act of arbitrary and *absolute power* but an act of God's grace. Such sovereignty is so related both to God's grace and to man's sin that both the grace of God and the justice of God preclude both man's self-righteousness and self-justification by allowing room only for the truth that "he who would glory, must glory in the Lord." When the spirit of self-righteousness emerges in churches which stress the sovereignty of God in election and reprobation, these churches should look again to what they understand by the sovereignty of God.

Tamme M. Vanden Bosch

by J. G. Vanden Bosch

INTEREST IN MISSIONS is in rising tide in the Christian Reformed churches today. In obedience to Christ's command to teach all nations, missionary activity is being carried on in several parts of the globe, in Japan, Ceylon, Nigeria, Cuba, and among the aborigines of the United States of America. China would be included in this enumeration, had not the Red revolution silenced the voice of our missionaries there. Canada, Brazil, Argentina, and Australia are countries in which our ministers are proclaiming the gospel. And in many places, both rural and urban, men are bringing, with commendable zeal and self-sacrifice, the gospel of salvation to the unchurched and the forgotten. In view of this widespread zeal, one is curious to know something about the history of the missionary movement among us, its origin and development. In answer to this curiosity we would say that almost fifty years ago there passed from this earthly scene a man who was our first missionary both among pioneers and Indians and who may well be considered the embodiment of the missionary spirit among us in our early years.

TAMME VANDEN BOSCH — this was his name — was born August 3, 1843, at Nyensleek in the province of Drente, the Netherlands, son of Melle Vanden Bosch. Being the oldest son, he was named after

his grandfather, who came to these shores in 1848, a year later than Van Raalte and his group, and whose remains are resting in an unmarked grave on a farm near Zeeland, Michigan. At the early age of five Tamme came to this country with his parents, who settled on a farm near Zeeland, where the boy grew to manhood. Out of this primitive environment with its limited possibilities he was drafted into the army to be a soldier in the Civil War. What experiences he underwent in the Civil War the writer does not know, but army life most assuredly left its mark on him. One of the lessons he undoubtedly learned was the value of order, of obedience to authority, of discipline. And not less surely was his horizon widened and were his sympathies broadened. In the army he met fellow soldiers hailing from all nooks and corners of the Union, some of whom were decent men and even Christians deserving his respect, and some of whom were very much in need of moral and spiritual quickening or renewal. He discovered that not all virtue and true Christianity were to be found in the Dutch settlements of Western Michigan. War experiences helped him to understand his fellow citizens a little better than he had done.

Mustered out of the army, Vanden Bosch devoted himself to mercantile pursuits, yet always with a desire to enter the ministry. At one time he was associated with a brother-in-law, who was a tinsmith. Having acquired enough education to function as a teacher, for two years, from 1875 to 1877, he conducted a Christian school in Kalamazoo, the building being erected on a lot of his own. He was, therefore, one of the pioneers in the Christian school movement. But the urge to enter the ministry he could no longer suppress. Thus it was in 1877 that he sought admission as a student to the Theological School at Grand Rapids, passed the examination in literary studies with a *cum laude*, and was permitted to pursue studies in theology only. Ten years later he graduated. Cornelius Bode was his classmate.

In 1879 Vanden Bosch was ordained, and in accordance with his desire to be a traveling preacher, *reizend predikant,* as he termed what he aimed at being, a position roughly resembling that of a circuit rider among the Methodists in early days, he was installed as home missionary. His inaugural sermon was based on I Corinthians 2:2 — "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." One can see how the ambition to be an itinerant pastor took root in him and developed into something like a master passion. Loyal to his denomination, he took its needs to heart. He knew that many a pioneer family lived, as it were, in dispersion and might be lost to the faith unless someone filled with compassion for drifting souls would seek them and gather them into congregations. He knew that at classical meetings the desirability of placing a home missionary in the field had been discussed more than once. He knew that the efforts of securing a minister from the Netherlands for the work had been futile. We can imagine that Vanden Bosch, pondering all these things in his heart, was led, when the General Assembly called in vain for a volunteer, to offer himself as a candidate for the position of itinerant preacher, in spite of the fact that the collections for home missions were ridiculously small. The salary promised him was $550 a year.

Rev. Vanden Bosch began his career with zeal and devotion. He was not spoiled by luxury or an easy way of living, but willingly endured hardships for the gospel's sake. Often he had no choice but to travel in a farmer's lumber wagon or in a prairie schooner over roads that were uncertain and dangerous. Sometimes there were thunderstorms or even snowstorms to be braved. Instead of being with loved ones in a comfortable home he journeyed from one place to another and spent days, at times weeks, in primitive shelters built of sod or logs. The food the pioneer hostess generously set before him was of the plainest and commonest kind, lacking the delicacy and exquisiteness of good home cooking. He had but little time for such study as he needed to be a proficient preacher. Gladly he bore the heat of the day and the cool of the night.

Wherever prospects allured he went. How extensive was the territory he covered! The forests in the vicinity of Cadillac in Northern Michigan, Cleveland and Cincinnati in Ohio, Chicago in Illinois, Alto in Wisconsin, Pella and Steamboat Rock in Iowa, Rotterdam in Kansas, Hastings in Nebraska, were the scenes of his evangelical labors. Accompanied by Rev. Henry Bode, he toured Dakota to ascertain what prospects there were among the Dutch settlers in that state. His efforts were blessed. When in 1882 he handed in his resignation, Synod was loath to accept it and urged him to continue, so well pleased that body was with the services rendered and with the results of his ministry. The three years had been blessed years, but the work of a home missionary entailed so much inconvenience for himself and wife and so much self-denial that he felt constrained to resign.

His first experience as pastor of an established church was gained in First Chicago, now Berwyn. Here he had the courage to be the successor to his uncle, the veteran Rev. K. Vanden Bosch. The two events that highlighted his ministry in this church were the organization of a Sunday school and the moving into larger quarters to accommodate the growing audiences. Though his labors were blessed, he could not turn a deaf ear to a call extended to him by the church at New Holland, Dakota, so that he left Chicago after a brief patorate of less than a year. Evidently the prospect of being the pastor of a church newly organized and composed of pio-

neers on the plains of Dakota appealed to Rev. Vanden Bosch. His pastoral ministrations would bear a strong resemblance to what he had been doing as a home missionary. Appreciation was not wanting during the two years he was at New Holland, but an invitation from the neighboring church at Harrison, just organized, he could not set aside. The pleadings of the Harrison people were so insistent that they gave him a second call. Alas, disappointment was their doom, for a year later he ceased his labors among them.

His next charge was Jenison, Michigan, where he served from 1886 to 1888. His was the privilege of being the first pastor also of this church as he was of New Holland and Harrison. At his coming this congregation was eleven years old. Heaven's favor rested upon his pastoral work. In the memorial published at the celebration of this church's seventy-fifth aniversary we read that the auditorium was enlarged to accommodate the increase in attendance and that room was provided for the stabling of forty horses. But two years had barely gone by when he yielded to the pleas of the church at Vriesland, Michigan, now defunct, that had sent him a call. This was in 1888. He was the last pastor of this once so flourishing congregation which gradually declined because of its nearness to other churches and inability to come to an agreement as to a new location so that the congregation disbanded five years after Rev. Vanden Bosch's departure. His stay in Vriesland of only a year was too brief to produce a marked impression upon the life of the church. He left Vriesland to become the church's first missionary to the Indians.

THE DENOMINATION had never been heedless of the mandate to preach the gospel to all nations. It felt it to be its duty to acquaint first of all the aborigines of this country, the Indians, with the gospel of Christ. It felt that it was morally obliged to do so. But there were no volunteers for the evangelization of the Indians until Rev. Vanden Bosch announced that he was willing to go. Synod was glad to accept him and in 1889 sent him to the Rosebud Agency in South Dakota. But alack and alas, before the year was spent he begged to be released of his obligation. That fickle, unstable nature of his was no match for the stolidity and the obstinacy of the Indians. It was not his nature to study the soul of the Indian and to adapt his methods to their ways of living and their mental attitudes. And he lacked the patience to await the result of evangelization perseveringly carried on from year to year. But though Rev. Vanden Bosch was a disappointment, the church did not lose courage. Only six years later it sent out its missionaries to the Navahos.

The eastside congregation of Cleveland, Ohio, now called him and he accepted. In this rather small charge in a bustling industrial city he had labored three years when he heeded a call from the Reformed church at Lucas, Michigan. Why he made this sudden change in denominational allegiance the writer was not able to ascertain. He who had been a man from whom great things were expected was from this time forth almost completely forgotten. He served Reformed churches at Lucas, Michigan, DeMotte, Indiana, and Three Oaks and North Blendon, Michigan. In 1911 he became an agent for the Chicago Tract Society, an activity which revealed the evangelistic zeal of the man even in his old age. The days of his superannuation were spent in Zeeland until a mental affliction necessitated his removal to the asylum at Kalamazoo, where he died, August 19, 1913, at the age of seventy, but not until he had regained his mental balance. His end was peaceful. His remains were interred in the cemetery at Zeeland where they await the resurrection morning.

Rev. Vanden Bosch married a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Van Loo, a loyal and stauch member of the First Church of Zeeland, Michigan, in its early days. The couple were the parents of two adopted children, a son and a daughter.

REV. VANDEN BOSCH was a man with a kind heart, a sympathizer with people in their woes and a comforter of those in distress. Those who came to him with their troubles found in him a ready counselor with whom it was not hard to speak about intimate religious experiences. But there was in his nature a strain of instability which accounts for his brief pastorates, his impatience as a missionary among the Indians, and his forsaking the denomination he had so ardently loved and continued to love till his death. Yet Rev. Vanden Bosch was a messenger of the cross. He proclaimed the gospel of free and sovereign grace, and the promise of God is that His Word will not return unto Him void. It would seem, however, to be a fair judgment that, had he spent his energies entirely in the field of home missions, his career would have been a happier one though it would have involved much perseverance and self-denial. Such a career seemed more suitable to his restless spirit. That he chose in the closing years of his life to be an agent for the Chicago Tract Society is significant, for it gave him opportunity to witness for Christ whom he dearly loved.

In conclusion, be it said that it was his concern for people adrift spiritually that prompted him to choose a ministerial career, that transformed a teacher in a Christian school into an itinerant preacher, that filled him with compassion for the Indians, that led him to start a fund for the distribution of Bibles among the heathen to which he himself contributed one hundred dollars, and that inspired him in the days of his retirement to labor for the Chicago Tract Society.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

A set of books for children by C. S. Lewis. (*The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe, Prince Caspian, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair, The Horse and His Boy, The Magician's Nephew, The Last Battle,*) published by Macmillan.

Reviewed by JOHN BEVERSLUIS, teacher of Bible and English, Christian Junior High School, Paterson, N. J.

In a sermon which he preached in one of the churches at Oxford, C. S. Lewis said, "It may be possible for each of us to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature, which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, in a nightmare only. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities . . . that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. . . . It is the immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean, however, that we must be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously — no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feelings for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner — no more tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment."

This grand theme, I think, may well be taken as that which determines the mood or atmosphere of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* a set of books for children by C. S. Lewis. It is a theme which emerges with many variations throughout the books. But it is one which somehow always receives a disciplined, spiritual orchestration from the counter melody provided by Gethsemane and Golgotha.

The Chronicles of Narnia are not all concerned with a superficial or sentimental set of rules for being good. Nor are they preoccupied with trying to smuggle in still another vague and over-simplified version of the Golden Rule. They are not children's stories as that term is commonly understood. They are not concerned with preaching or moralizing, or with any other form of that peculiar type of propaganda of which so-called "religious fiction" is so fond. In fact, one of the chief merits of the books is that they describe the ultimate collapse of mere morality. They do not, then, fall under the suspect category of "Religious Fiction." They spend no time with histories of conversions, or with ill-timed, if not defiant, calls to repentance.

There are seven books in all. Taken together and read consecutively they cover the entire history of the imaginary land of Narnia. This is a land peopled by dwarves, dryads, centaurs, satyrs, talking beasts and trees, a land into which certain children (and a few adults) from our own world gain temporary entrance by special permission of Aslan the Lion, the Son-of-the-Great-Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Only three of them deal with isolated Christian themes. One describes the creation of Narnia and its fall; another, the death and resurrection of Aslan (which provides redemption); and the third, the final struggle, the last judgment, the end of the world of Narnia and the entrance of the true followers into that eternal Land, Aslan's Country.

The other four books deal with "ordinary" life. There is very little which in itself rises above the commonplace. But because of the Presence of Aslan (who represents Christ), and because of His intervention into history, every part of life has taken on a new dimension. And, if we but have eyes to see, nothing can ever be commonplace again. Everything has become, in a sense, new.

Although the complete set includes seven books, each may be read on its own. There is everything a young reader wants — action, danger, suspense, fun, thrills and all the rest. And if no more were gained from the reading, it would still be immensely worthwhile. But all literature, if it is to be significant, must do more than entertain. It must mirror reality. More than that, it must interpret reality. Values must emerge not in isolation from the real job of living but as part of its very fabric. This is difficult to achieve on any level, but it is especially difficult when one is writing for children since the tendencies to oversimplify, to exaggerate and to become black and white are so much greater. Values (and the supernatural) must appear not as something foreign and incongruous to the concrete situations of life; they must appear as part of life's very context.

For Mr. Lewis, the natural and the supernatural are not separated by a great gulf; they are woven together like a fine cloth, and he moves effortlessly from the one to the other carrying his reader along so unassumingly that it becomes apparent that life is not neatly divided into two parts, the one secular and the other sacred. Everything matters. Nothing is excluded from, or irrelevant to, one's basic religious commitment. Indeed, "all day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of the two ultimate destinations."

That all things ought to be done to the glory of God is obvious. But simply to say this does not remove the problems from life. It is one of the givens. It is not the conclusion; it is the starting point. And in these books, as in life itself, it is not accomplished by saying it, or by wishing for it, nor even by merely praying for it. It takes hard work. As one reads into the set he sees creatures learning that only partial fulfillment of their duties must produce neither pride because of achievement nor despair

because of failure. For there is One who must be taken into account in every situation; Aslan, the Lion.

Although the purpose of the books is not exclusively to present a picture of Aslan, yet He has a central and unifying part to play in each of them. He is the One in whom everyone and everything else finds its ultimate meaning. After reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, The Magician's Nephew* and *The Last Battle* every reader will have formed a very definite impression of Aslan. And the kind of Personality that is revealed is one of the most satisfying parts of *The Chronicles of Narnia.* C. S. Lewis has given many marvelous insights into what the only real Personality is like. He has succeeded in making Our Lord real to Children.

Aslan is to be loved, but He is also to be feared. These two distinct ideas are kept in an admirable balance. There is none of the contemporary religious emphasis on Jesus as a mere "chum" or "friend." Asland is to be feared. "He is a kind Lion, but not a tame one," we are told. For Aslan is the Creator of all worlds, the Judge of all who live. Yet He is wonderfully human. He allows regal intimacies which never degenerate into merely sentimental relationships. He plays tag. He lets the children do what they always wanted to do from the very first moment they saw Him — bury their hands in His mane. He can laugh more heartily than anyone else. At times it seems as if He alone sees the real humor. At one point He is so overcome with joy that He warns them all that "He feels a roar coming on."

But at the same time He is the "Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief." His enemies mock Him before they sacrifice Him. They shave off His golden mane. They call Him "nothing but a great cat." And at times such as this one it seems as if He alone sees the real pathos.

Those whose theology compels them to say that Jesus never laughed may find some of Aslan's activities rather coarse. But perhaps these same persons would find eating and drinking with publicans and prostitutes equally coarse. But all such judgments are, largely, a matter of taste; they cannot be dogmatically enforced. What must be reckoned with, however, is that here is a real attempt to deal meaningfully with both the divine and the human natures of Christ in a way other than that of pure theory. Here is an imaginative portrait which tries to recreate what is implied by the theological terms "unmixed and unconfused," and "undivided and unseparated."

It is, therefore, an imaginative portrait of Our Lord which is true to the Biblical Christian tradition. It is an authentic picture of the Christ. The God-Man whom C. S. Lewis knows is not a "proper" or "amiable" Person. He is a Person who is capable of being considered dangerous and nailed to a cross. He is a Christ who is capable of creating a lasting "scandal."

The age level of the set of books is broadly from five to twelve years. I recommend that they be placed in grade school and junior high school libraries. But although this would be a fine thing to do, libraries ought never take the place of the home. It is in the home that these books should be read and talked about. For they have something important to contribute.

At the close of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* the children are being sent back to their own world, and Lucy says:

> "Please Aslan, before we go, will you tell us when we can come back to Narnia? Please. And, oh do, do, do make it soon."

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"Dearest," said Aslan gently, "you and your brother will never come back to Narnia."

"Oh, Aslan," said Edmund.

"You are too old, children," said Aslan, "and you must begin to come close to your own world now."

"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's you. We shan't meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.

"Are — are you there, too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here a little, you may know me better there."

Fiction, having such a purpose and achieving it so well, can scarcely be ignored.

BOOK NOTES

La Pensée Economique et Sociale de Calvin. By André Bieler. Geneva: Georg, 1959. 562 pp.

The thought of John Calvin is ever contemporary in relevance, writes Pastor Bieler. This fact is one of the grounds which entitled Henri Hauser to entitle a study of the sixteenth century, *The Modernity of the Sixteenth Century.* Across four centuries Calvin exerts a major, and now growing, influence in the thought and life of our own era.

To fill a gap which he had discerned in the many studies of Calvin, the author dedicates to the University of Geneva, on the occasion of its 400th anniversary, this extensive study of the social and economic thought of the University's founder.

The book is divided into two large parts: (I) the integral and all-embracing character of the Calvinist Reformation, and (II) the doctrines underlying this reformation.

Part I creates, then, the social and economic context into which Calvin came, develops the thought of Calvin's predecessors and contemporaries, and describes in detail the socio-economic reforms at Geneva brought about by the influence of Calvin.

Part II, the longer portion of the book, expounds in detail the doctrinal basis for Calvin's social theories: his views on man, on society, the meaning

of history, the functions of church and of state in socio-economic life. The author develops at length the implications of Calvin's views for the various forms of labor: handicraft, peasantry and agricultural, artistic, intellectual, trading and business, financial. He then takes up Calvin's exposition of Biblical passages particularly relevant to social and economic themes; and he concludes with reference to Calvin's relation to capitalism and the views on this subject of Troeltsch, Weber, and Tawney.

Whatever was the gap in this area of Calvin studies before, the publication of this valuable study does much to fill it in. An English translation is eminently desirable.

Politik zwischen Daemon und Gott. By Walter Kuenneth. Berlin: Lutherisches Verlag, 1954. 616 pp.

The reality of the demonic in everyday life is a recurrent theme in contemporary European thought. The tension between God and Satan which every man encounters in his political relations is, says this author, the central and decisive fact of our era.

No "recipe" for conduct in this tension can be supplied by an evangelical theological ethics, Dr. Kuenneth says; but what a "Christian political ethic" can provide is an exposition of principles, drawn in eschatological perspective, which will illumine the scope and direction of history and thus afford norms for determining conduct.

In Part I the author expounds the Biblical-Reformation foundations for political ethics, including therein the Biblical conception of history, the position of the early Christian church in the political context of its times, and the political concepts developed by the Lutheran Reformation.

In Part II the writer turns to the basic elements in political relationships: the idea of law, of the state, of power, of the nation, of the mass-man and totalitarian state, and the dialectic of Marxism.

Part III deals with tyranny, revolt, and war.

Part IV elaborates the Christian concepts of honor, the oath, obedience, obligation, compromise, with the express relation of these to contemporary political life.

Part V is devoted to the role of the Christian community in the state: as state-church; as understood by Catholicism, by the Reformation, by the Anabaptists.

This massive book is one more witness to the awful consciousness of the demonic use of political power thrust upon Europe by the Nazi-Fascist tyrannies of yesterday and the Communist threat of today. The imperative sense of inescapable involvement in the issues of the day, issues which but thinly conceal the spiritual forces struggling for mastery of the human soul, comes to overt expression in even the titles of countless European post-war ethical and religious works, of which this volume is illustrative.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

GENTLEMEN:

Several years ago, in a lecture delivered at the University of Indiana, one of the world's most respected Christian philosophers, Etienne Gilson, said

> The existence or nonexistence of God . . . is a proposition whose negation or affirmation determines no change whatever in the structure of our scientific explanation of the world and is wholly independent of the contents of science as such.[1]

He rested his assertion on a distinction between two types of knowledge on which the human mind may lay hold, one scientific — the accumulated answers to questions concerning *what* things are — and the other existential (or metaphysical) — the answers to questions concerning *why* things are. Religious interpretations of nature, he said, never worry about the what-ness of things and, by the same token, scientific explanations, properly so called, never presume to answer questions such as, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Any attempt to cross the lines of demarcation between the two types of knowledge inevitably leads either to "pseudometaphysical science" or to "misguided theology."

More recently a professor of philosophy at Calvin College, the late Dr. Cecil DeBoer, in the same spirit as Gilson's lecture, wrote that

> Science, as distinguished from the various secularistic interpretations of it, concerns a dimension of reality which touches only casually the plane upon which religion moves.[2]

The distinction between types of knowledge here becomes one between dimensions of reality, but the meaning is effectively the same. Prof. DeBoer clarified the issues further by contributing to our vocabulary the pivotal concept of "scientificism," by means of which he intended to distinguish scientists qua executors of the scientific quest from scientists qua metaphysical dilettantes. The former, properly advised, would consider it "amateurish" to "trespass upon the domain of religion." The point which reduces much of the controversy between science and irreligion to a general pooling of ignorance is the simple observation that scientific knowledge claims factuality only for a very limited set of phenomena, i.e., concerns itself with considerably "restricted areas of reality."

From the point of view of the Christian community as a whole, Gilson, DeBoer, and now Mr. C. Orlebeke performed and are performing an immensely useful service. If it is true, as A. N. Whitehead believed, that "the progress of science must result in the unceasing codification of religious thought to the great advantage of religion,"[3] then such men must be heard. At the same time, it must be remarked that the development of the "philosophy of nature" to which Mr. Orlebeke referred, must be carried forward. Prof. Hepp's lectures on the subject[4] suffer from the fact that he, too, appears to fail universally to distinguish the findings of science from the attitudes of scientists.

The scientific vocation, through it all, though held in general esteem, suffer private denigration. This course ought already to have been altered. After all, as Gilson said, "Why should not we keep truth, and keep it whole? It can be done."

Sincerely yours,

BRANDON H. WIERS

Minneapolis, Minnesota

1 *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941).

2 *Responsible Protestantism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

3 *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

4 *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1930).

SIRS:

The Committee of Literature for Evangelical Churches (CLIE), a non-profit Spanish organization, has secured approval and financing from the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to translate and publish some works of Reformed theology in the Spanish language.

Already Albertus Pieters' book *Facts and Mysteries of the Christian Faith* and J. Calvin Reid's book *We knew Jesus* have been printed and received most favorable book reviews. These volumes have been welcomed by editors, by libraries and bookstores in Latin America and Spain. Scheduled for future translation and publication is L. Berkhof's book *Summary of Christian Doctrine.* Works by John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, N. J. Monsma, J. K. van Baalen and other recognized Reformed theologians will follow as finances become available.

At the head of the Translation Committee is Mr. David W. Vila, M.A., B.D., a specialist in Spanish language and literature and also a candidate for the Th.M. degree at Calvin Seminary. Mr. Vila, who is a native of Spain, is presently teaching Bible and Spanish at the Reformed Bible Institute. Other translators hold degrees from the Universities of Madrid, Barcelona and Oxford.

CLIE, through a large network of contacts with churches, publishers, libraries, bookstores, Christian magazines, and theological schools in Latin America, will aim at giving the widest possible circulation to the Reformed literature to be published. Unfortunately, Reformed theology has not received the attention it deserves in Latin America, largely because of the lack of proper translations and publicity. It is the hope of CLIE that this effort will help to remedy the situation at a time when Communism is spending millions of dollars in literature to destroy the religious beliefs of 190 million people who live south of our border.

CLIE can only carry out this project through the prayers and generosity of Reformed believers in North America. It would appreciate hearing from Reformed people interested in the spiritual and material support of this project. Interested churches, societies and individuals can write for further information to:

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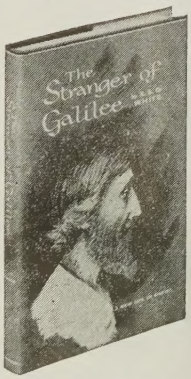

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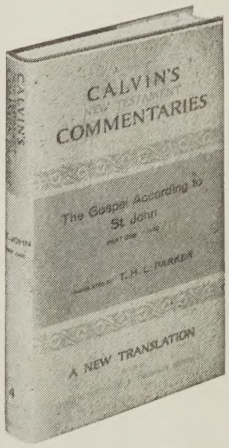

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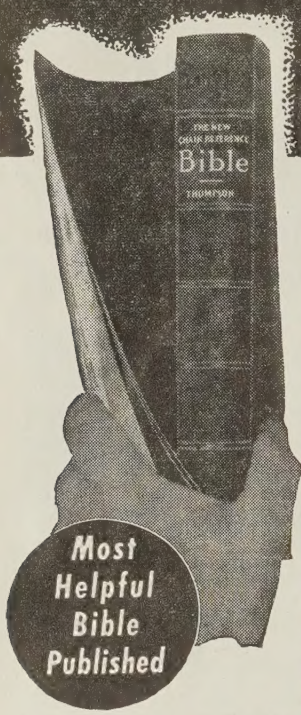

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